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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS (1) 02/08/10

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ARTICLES:

(1) Poll: 74 PERCENT say Ozawa should quit party post; Hatoyama cabinet's support rate at 44 PERCENT , nonsupport at 47 PERCENT

YOMIURI (Top play) (Abridged)
February 7, 2010

The Yomiuri Shimbun conducted a telephone-based public opinion survey across the nation on Feb. 5-6, in which the public approval rating for Prime Minister Hatoyama's cabinet was 44 PERCENT and the disapproval rating was 47 PERCENT . Support leveled off from the 45 PERCENT rating in the last survey conducted Jan. 16-17. However, nonsupport rose 5 percentage points and topped support for the first time since the Hatoyama cabinet came into office last September. In the survey, a total of 74 PERCENT said ruling Democratic Party of Japan Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa should resign from his party post following the indictment of his three former secretaries, including Tomohiro Ishikawa, currently a DPJ lawmaker seated in the House of Representatives, on the charge of violating the Political Funds Control Law over a politics-and-money problem involving Ozawa's fund management organization. The figure clearly shows a

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perception gap between the DPJ, which has decided to have Ozawa stay in his post, and the public.

Meanwhile, respondents were also asked where to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa Prefecture. In response to this question, 31 PERCENT said the Futenma airfield facility should be relocated "as agreed on between Japan and the United States," with 15 PERCENT saying it should be relocated "outside Okinawa Prefecture" and 35 PERCENT saying it should be relocated "outside Japan." Respondents were also asked if they were concerned about Japan-U.S. relations under the Hatoyama administration. To this question, 68 PERCENT answered "yes," with only 25 PERCENT saying "no." When asked if they thought the Hatoyama cabinet could turn the nation's economy around, 21 PERCENT answered "yes," while 66 PERCENT said "no." In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the DPJ stood at 33 PERCENT (34 PERCENT in the last survey), with the leading opposition Liberal Democratic Party remaining flat at 20 PERCENT (20 PERCENT in the last survey).

(2) Poll: Hatoyama cabinet's nonsupport rate at 45 PERCENT , support at 41 PERCENT ; 68 PERCENT urge Ozawa to resign from party post

ASAHI (Top play) (Abridged)
February 7, 2010

Following the prosecutors' decision not to indict ruling Democratic Party of Japan Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa over his political funds, the Asahi Shimbun conducted a telephone-based spot nationwide public opinion survey on Feb. 5-6. According to its findings, the rate of public support for Prime Minister Hatoyama's cabinet was 41 PERCENT and its nonsupport rate was 45 PERCENT . The Hatoyama cabinet's approval rating topped its disapproval rating for the first time since its inauguration. In the survey, a total of 68 PERCENT said Ozawa should resign as DPJ secretary general. Meanwhile, there will be an election this summer for the House of Councillors, and respondents were asked which political party they would vote for in their proportional representation blocs. In this popularity ranking of political parties, the DPJ scored 34 PERCENT , with the leading opposition Liberal Democratic Party closing in on the DPJ with 27 PERCENT . The figures can be taken as reflecting the politics-and-money problem of Ozawa.

In the previous survey, conducted Jan. 16-17, public opinion was split over the Hatoyama cabinet, with its support rate at 42 PERCENT

and its nonsupport rate at 41 PERCENT . The Hatoyama's cabinet's inaugural support and nonsupport ratings last September were respectively at 71 PERCENT and 14 PERCENT . The gap between the Hatoyama cabinet's approval and disapproval ratings gradually narrowed thereafter and finally changed places in the latest survey.

In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the DPJ stood at 34 PERCENT (36 PERCENT in the last survey), with the LDP at 18 PERCENT (16 PERCENT in the last survey).

(3) Poll: 72 PERCENT call for Ozawa to quit party post; Hatoyama cabinet's support rate remains flat

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Top play) (Abridged)
February 7, 2010

Kyodo News conducted a telephone-based nationwide public opinion

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survey on Feb. 5-6, in which 72.7 PERCENT of respondents said Ichiro Ozawa, secretary general of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan, should resign from his party post, while the prosecutors have dropped the case of his fund management organization's alleged falsification of political fund reports over its land purchase. The survey also showed that 22.8 PERCENT think Ozawa should be allowed to remain in his current party post. In this case, Tomohiro Ishikawa, one of Ozawa's former secretaries and currently a DPJ lawmaker seated in the House of Representatives, has been indicted. In this regard, respondents were asked what Ishikawa should do. To this question, 69.1 PERCENT said he should resign from the Diet, with 21.8 PERCENT saying he does not have to resign from the Diet. The public's harsh view of the "politics-and-money" problem has been revealed again.

The approval rating for Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and his cabinet leveled off at 41.4 PERCENT , down 0.1 percentage points from the last survey conducted Jan. 17-18. The disapproval rating for the Hatoyama cabinet was 45.1 PERCENT , up 1.0 points. The nonsupport rate continued to top the support rate from the last survey.

In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the DPJ stood at 33.6 PERCENT , up 1.5 points from the last survey. The leading opposition Liberal Democratic Party was at 22.8 PERCENT , up 0.1 points. The Your Party ranked third at 3.9 PERCENT , followed by the New Komeito at 3.7 PERCENT , the Japanese Communist Party at 2.3 PERCENT , the Social Democratic Party at 1.9 PERCENT , and the People's New Party at 0.8 PERCENT . "None" accounted for 30.4 PERCENT .

In the popularity ranking of political parties for this summer's House of Councillors election, the DPJ scored 33.6 PERCENT , up 5.2 points from the last survey, and the LDP was at 23.4 PERCENT , down 1.3 points. The gap between the two parties has widened.

(4) Ozawa eyes a visit to U.S.

NIKKEI (Page 3) (Full)
February 6, 2010

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa is now considering a visit to the U.S. during the Golden Week holidays starting from late April. Now that prosecutors dropped a case against him over the alleged false reporting of political funds by his fund-raising group Rikuzan-kai, Ozawa appears to want to recover political ground by playing a key role in promoting relations with the U.S. Some observers believe he holds the key in determining the fate of the deadlocked issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station.

Aim to contain criticism

Ozawa began mulling a U.S. visit in response to a request by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell and other U.S. officials during their meeting on Feb. 2.

Washington is considering even a meeting between Ozawa and President Barack Obama if Ozawa decides to visit the U.S.

Ozawa is thought to be aiming to use a visit to the U.S. to put behind him the land-deal case involving his political organization.

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Last year, Ozawa played up his political clout for both domestic and international observers through a visit to China with a retinue of DPJ lawmakers. Campbell has called for a U.S. visit by an Ozawa-led group of DPJ members. If the tour is realized, several senior party members will likely accompany Ozawa on the visit. A desire to contain criticism of Ozawa within the party also seems to be part of the calculus of a trip to the U.S.

The meeting between Campbell and Ozawa was decided on the evening of Feb. 1. Just before the decision was made, Ozawa had met Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano. An official said: "Upon learning that prosecutors decided to drop the case, Mr. Ozawa began arranging a visit to the U.S.

The Futenma issue is expected to reach an important stage during the Golden Week holidays as the Hatoyama cabinet has promised to decide by the end of May a relocation site for the Futenma facility. The government and the ruling parties have set up a panel tasked with discussing potential relocation sites, but a high-ranking government official said: "The panel has yet to explore a likely candidate site." The government may try to break the impasse with a visit to the U.S. by Ozawa, who holds enormous influence over ruling party members.

Ozawa's recent meetings with U.S. Government and Congress members

Feb. 17, 2009 Secretary of State Clinton
April 10 Republican Senator McCain and others
April 14 Former Ambassador Mondale
Oct. 21 Ambassador to Japan Roos
Oct. 27 Former Ambassador Armacost
Feb. 2, 2010 Campbell

(5) U.S. says Japan's reluctance to sign the Hague Convention "more serious than Futenma issue"

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)
Evening, February 6, 2010

Kei Sato, political reporter

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is having difficulty dealing with frequent cases of Japanese parents returning to Japan with their children without the consent of the other parent after the failure of international marriages. Western countries are turning up the pressure on Japan, which is not a signatory to the Hague Convention, an agreement stipulating the procedures for returning children in such cases to their countries of residence. Japan was also given a "yellow card" on this issue by the United States, with which relations are strained over the issue of the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan City, Okinawa).

During his recent visit to Japan, Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell made what is called "child abduction" the focus of his Feb. 2 news conference. He said: "This has also become an issue in Congress and may become a major concern in Japan-U.S. relations."

Among the G-7 advanced nations, Japan is the only one that is not a signatory to the Hague Convention. Western countries have repeatedly asked Japan to sign the treaty. Campbell's statement was a warning to Japan, which remains reluctant to do so.

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Western countries have reported to MOFA many cases of "child abduction" by Japanese parents: 77 from the U.S., 37 each from

Britain and Canada, and 35 from France. The U.S., which is involved with the most number of cases, is frustrated with this situation. A person connected to the U.S. Embassy in Japan said, "This is more serious than the Futenma issue."

It is not that Japan has not taken any action at all. MOFA created a new office on parental rights issues last December and began to study the pros and cons of signing the Hague Treaty. It has met with U.S. and French officials to discuss how to deal with specific cases.

However, at this stage the government remains cautious on signing the treaty at an early date. It has been pointed out that domestic violence by foreign husbands is behind many cases of child abduction. There is persistent opposition to signing the treaty among parties involved with this issue. Legislative measures will also be required to establish procedures for returning the children to their countries of residence.

For now, MOFA intends to find solutions for each case on an individual basis. It is hard pressed to handle the liaison for such cases.

(6) Cabinet makes formal decision on SDF dispatch for PKO in Haiti

YOMIURI (Top play) (Excerpts)
February 6, 2010

At a cabinet meeting on Feb. 5, the government approved an implementation plan and the related government ordinances relating to the dispatch of around 350 members of the engineering and other units of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) for a reconstruction aid mission in Haiti, which was hit by a devastating earthquake, based on the UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) Cooperation law. This will be the first PKO mission initiated under the Hatoyama administration. The SDF contingent will operate under the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and will engage in clearing land for the construction of refugee facilities, removal of rubble, road construction, and other activities. This will be the seventh time for the SDF to participate in PKO, and the size of the contingent will be third largest ever, following the Cambodia mission in 1992-93 (approximately 600 members) and the East Timor mission in 2002-04 (approximately 690 members).

After the formal cabinet decision was made, Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa issued the dispatch orders on the evening of Feb. 5. The first party of around 160 members, consisting of members of the Ground SDF's (GSDF) Central Readiness Force (based in Utsunomiya) and other units will depart Japan on Feb. 6 and arrive in Haiti before dawn on Feb. 8 (morning of Feb. 7 local time) at the earliest. The second party consisting of the GSDF's Fifth Brigade (based in Obihiro City, Hokkaido) will leave for Haiti in late February. Two SDF officers will also be sent to the MINUSTAH headquarters.

Meanwhile, the Liberal Democratic Party began work on Feb. 5 to draft a permanent (general) law on SDF overseas missions for submission to the current Diet session, judging that this will be a good opportunity, since the Social Democratic Party also supported the PKO mission in Haiti.

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(7) GSDF team departs for Haiti to engage in PKO

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 7, 2010

The first group of about 160 members of the Self-Defense Force left for Haiti on Feb. 6 to engage in UN peacekeeping operations and help with reconstruction activities in the impoverished Caribbean nation devastated by the Jan. 12 quake. This is the first SDF dispatch on a UN peacekeeping mission under the administration of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama. On the same day, the Maritime Self-Defense Forces' fleet that was engaged in the refueling operations in the Indian Ocean returned to Tokyo's Harumi pier after completing its mission.

The Hatoyama administration defines the PKO mission to Haiti as a new way to contribute to the international community.

"Japan is going to play an active role in conducting UN peacekeeping operations, antiterrorism measures, and humanitarian assistance," Prime Minister Hatoyama addressed the group during its send-off ceremony held at the Defense Ministry. The unit will arrive in Port-au-Prince on Feb. 8. In Haiti, the SDF team will engage in such activities as clearing rubble and improving facilities for refugees

(8) Government acknowledges discretionary diplomatic funds paid to Prime Minister's Official Residence

MAINICHI (Top play) (Lead paragraph)
February 6, 2010

The Hatoyama cabinet on Feb. 5 adopted a written response acknowledging that the Foreign Ministry's remuneration expenses (discretionary diplomatic funds) have been paid to the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei) in the past. This is the first time for the government to acknowledge this practice. The government adopted the response in reply to a written request presented by House of Representatives member Muneo Suzuki (New Party Daichi). Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada explained the reason for the change in the government's view at a press conference later in the day: "Since we have taken over the reins of government, I provided the facts as facts."

(9) Interview: Nago mayor to resign if Futenma base is to be relocated to Henoko, will not accept any compromise

ASAHI (Page 39) (Full)
February 7, 2010

Interviewer: Atsushi Matsukawa

Susumu Inamine, 64, who will become the mayor of Nago City, Okinawa on Feb. 8, gave an interview to Asahi Shimbun where he commented on the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station to Henoko in Nago City and said: "If I am unable to keep my promise, I will resign." He thus stressed that he will put his job as mayor on the line in upholding his pledge to oppose Futenma's relocation.

Matsukawa: What will happen to the Henoko relocation plan after you become mayor?

Inamine: It will probably be scrapped.

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Matsukawa: In the past three mayoral elections, candidates accepting the relocation won. Why do you think you won on a platform of opposing the relocation?

Inamine: Although economic development measures linked to the military bases have continued for 10 years and substantial funds have been expended, the people's livelihoods have not improved. The reason (I won the election) is probably because many citizens have come to realize that.

Matsukawa: If the government says it wants to relocate the Futenma base to Henoko after all, what will you do?

Inamine: I have made a commitment not to allow the construction of any new base in Henoko. I will stand by that commitment to the end. If the government makes such a proposal, I will have to lead the citizens in taking action to express our opposition.

Matsukawa: Will you be able to persist in opposing the plan as mayor? There are some doubts about that.

Inamine: If I am not able to keep my promise, I will resign (as mayor). The way to win trust is by maintaining integrity.

Matsukawa: What if the government is hoping to find a point of compromise?

Inamine: That would be a big mistake.

Matsukawa: What will you do if you are presented with an alternative plan that imposes a lighter burden in terms of the environment and noise than the current plan? For example, the relocation of some Futenma functions to the land area of Camp Schwab in Henoko, Nago City.

Inamine: Anything that would enhance the existing functions of the base is unacceptable.

Matsukawa: When you first announced your candidacy, you did not take such a tough stance against the relocation.

Inamine: We have personal experience of how Okinawa has had to live with oppression under the political and historical situation. I have been opposed to the construction of a new military base from the beginning.

Matsukawa: You are saying that you will not rely on economic measures linked to the bases. Do you have any concrete plans?

Inamine: In the past, the annual gross agricultural production of Nago exceeded 9 billion yen, but it has dropped by approximately 4 billion yen. If we are able to recover this 4 billion yen, it will be a source of income that we can gain through hard work. I would also like to look into the potentials of experience-based and long-stay tourism and tourism involving exchanges (with the local people). I have no intention to spend time on the base issues. I would like to work right away on developing agriculture and tourism.

(10) Major questions and answers from Feb. 5 House of Representatives Budget Committee session - Prime Minister: Government will not make light of the popular will expressed in

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victory of anti-relocation candidate in Nago mayoral election

NIKKEI (Page 4) (Excerpts)
February 6, 2010

Futenma base issue

Kantoku Teruya (of the Social Democratic Party): In the recent mayoral election in Nago, Okinawa Prefecture, a candidate opposed to the plan to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station to the Henoko district was elected.

Prime Minister: The popular will must not be taken lightly. If I had opted to reach a conclusion at the end of last year in accordance with a Japan-U.S. agreement, I would have decided to move the base to Henoko. But I have postponed my decision until May, thinking such was not possible.

Teruya: What about the possibility of the continued use of Futenma Air Station and maintaining the status quo?

Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa: The base is scheduled to be returned in 2014, but under the current situation, there is some uncertainty about whether the plan can be implemented fully. The base cannot be moved until the relocation site is completely functional. Points such as whether the base should be moved in stages or relocated all at once when the new base is completed have not yet been studied in detail.

Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement

Teruya: The Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement is too unequal.

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada: Some factors can be improved through talks and the administration of the agreement, so we would like to hold serious talks with the United States. We also have a revision of the SOFA in mind. We are going to resolve the Futenma Air Station relocation issue properly by the end of May. After that, we would

like to propose a revision of the SOFA.

Futenma base issue

Shigeru Ishiba (of the Liberal Democratic Party): Do you think the United States will agree to revise the agreement to relocate U.S. forces in Japan to Guam?

Prime Minister: We need to do everything we can until a new relocation site is determined.

Ishiba: Is the end of May (the deadline) for everything, including obtaining the United States' consent to revise the agreement?

Foreign Minister: We are discussing whether the contents of the agreement should be left as is. If the United States is convinced, making changes will be possible. But revising the agreement concerns the Diet as well, so we cannot decide on our own whether that can be done by the end of May.

North Korean issue

Ishiba: North Korea has increased its nuclear capabilities markedly over the last several years. To deal with North Korea, it is

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essential for Japan, the United States, South Korea, and China to be appropriately aware of the situation.

Foreign Minister: North Korea's current situation is of great concern. It is essential that UN sanctions be implemented and individual deals not be cut with that country. We are in complete agreement with the approach of continuing the current sanctions patiently until the North can be properly brought back to the Six-Party Talks.

(11) Japan-U.S. finance ministerial: Agreement reached to ensure both economic turnaround and fiscal reconstruction

NIKKEI (Top play) (Abridged slightly)
Evening, February 6, 2010

Yuji Kihara, Iqaluit (in northeastern Canada)

Finance Minister Naoto Kan on the evening of Feb. 5 (morning of the 6th, Japan time) held talks with U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Timothy Geithner for about 40 minutes at a hotel in Iqaluit, Canada. Concerning the management of policies after the global financial crunch, they agreed on the need to balance economic turnaround with fiscal reconstruction. They also reaffirmed a policy of taking a concerted approach to reforming financial regulations.

The talks took place prior to the meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors from the Group of Seven nations (G-7). It was their first meeting since Kan took office as finance minister, although they also met in November last year when Geithner visited Japan. Senior Vice Finance Minister Kohei Otsuka was also present at the meeting.

Emerging from the meeting, Kan told the press corps: "Both Japan and the U.S. have the two policy challenges of turning around their economy and reconstructing their public finances. We shared the perception that we both have similar thorny issues." The two apparently confirmed the need to press ahead with economic stimulus measures while giving consideration to fiscal discipline in view of concerns about growing budget deficits surfacing both in Japan and the U.S. as a result of active public spending.

Geithner reportedly explained President Obama's new financial regulatory policy, including a ban on investment in hedge funds by banks. Kan told the press corps, "The issue will top the agenda at the plenary session." He thus indicated the outlook that in-depth discussions of the issue would be pursued at the G-7 meeting.

The Department of the Treasury after the meeting released a statement, which read that the Japanese and U.S. finance ministers

reaffirmed a policy of discussing measures to correct the imbalance of the global economy and shore up the economy from the financial crisis, and addressing the financial regulation issue in cooperation with 20 countries and regions, including G-7 member nations and emerging countries, on a priority basis.

(12) Toyota president offers formal apology

ASAHI (Top play) (Lead paragraph)
February 6, 2010

Toyota Motor Co. President Akio Toyoda held on the night of Feb. 5

TOKYO 00000249 010 OF 012

the first press conference related to Toyota's series of quality-control problems discovered since last fall, including sticking accelerator pedals resulting in a recall. He said, "I apologize from the bottom of my heart for causing our customers trouble and concern." He then said: "I as the head of a manufacturing company feel extreme regret that our company has caused our customers concern about the quality of our cars. The company's situation is critical," indicating that Toyota will quickly come up with measures to improve safety.

(13) U.S. government seeks level playing field in response to invitation for public opinions on review of postal privatization

NIKKEI (Page 5) (Full)
February 6, 2010

"The United States requests that (the Japanese government) not give preferential treatment to the Japan Post Group in insurance, banking, and express (postal and delivery) services" - (American Embassy in Japan). It has been learned that the U.S. government submitted an opinion seeking a level playing field with the private sector in response to an invitation for opinions from the public on a review of postal services by the government's postal reform promotion office (PRPO) from last December through this January.

The postal reform promotion office on Feb. 5 announced the results of the public opinions submitted. Two hundred and nineteen opinions were submitted both from organizations and individuals. The Japanese Bankers Association expressed its concern about the expansion of postal services. The postal services industry labor union sought the unified management of three businesses - postal services, postal savings, and postal insurance.

(14) Kamei to reveal draft postal reform plan today

ASAHI (Page 5) (Full)
February 6, 2010

In an interview after a cabinet meeting yesterday, State Minister for Postal Reform Shizuka Kamei said that he would reveal on Feb. 8 the draft of a postal reform bill, which he plans to submit to the current Diet session. Since opinions are split over a proposal to raise the maximum limit on the money deposited with Japan Post Bank Co. and the rates of shares in integrated postal firms held by the government, no conclusion is likely to be specified in the bill. Kamei hopes to coordinate the views of ruling party members after hearing them. Regarding the management structure of the group, the bill is expected to propose a three-company system in which Japan Post Bank and Japan Post Insurance Co. would be placed under a holding company to be formed by integrating Japan Post Holdings Co., Japan Post Service Co., and Japan Post Network Co.

(15) METI minister announces plan to revise energy plan by June

ASAHI (Page 5) (Full)
February 6, 2010

Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) Minister Masayuki Naoshima on Feb. 5 announced that the ministry will revise Japan's "Basic Energy Plan," which stipulates the direction of the nation's energy policy until 2030, by June. The revised plan will present a path toward balancing economic growth with measures to curb global warming by

incorporating expanded use of renewable energies and accelerated development of environmental technologies. To be precise, the government intends to include in the new plan measures to promote the introduction of renewable energies, such as solar energy generation and wind power generation, and steps to boost the dissemination of next-generation vehicles.

The Hatoyama administration intends to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent from the 1990 level by 2020. Naoshima, however, steered clear of mentioning the share of reductions to be achieved through domestic measures by 2020 that will be included in the revision this time.

A basic plan committee will be set up under the resources and energy research council, an advisory panel reporting to the METI minister. The committee will launch discussions on Feb. 9. Panel members will likely include academic experts, consumers, and representatives of the labor sector. Industry circles will only participate in hearings.

(16) Parliamentary secretary: Government taskforce eyes easing conditions for issuing visas to Chinese tourists from July

NIKKEI (Page 5) (Full)
February 6, 2010

The government taskforce to promote tourists from overseas, headed by Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Minister Seiji Maehara, agreed at a meeting of its working group on Feb. 5 that the taskforce will come up with a policy direction by March with regard to the easing of conditions for issuing tourist visas to individual Chinese.

Parliamentary Secretary Yuji Fujimoto told the press corps:
"Coinciding with the start of full-fledged issuance of visas in July, we want to ease conditions."

In connection with tourist visas for Chinese individuals, it has been noted that conditions such as that applicants must have an annual income of 250,000 yuan are too strict. As a result, a review of the conditions for visa issuance is now being discussed.

At present, Japan issues tourist visas at diplomatic posts in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. In July, it will begin issuing visas at all of its diplomatic and consular offices in China, including Qingdao, Shenyang, Chongqing, and Dalian. The government taskforce is hoping to increase the number of Chinese tourists by boosting the number of locations at which visas are issued and easing the conditions for visa issuance.

(17) Fisheries minister to propose scaling down research whaling on condition of resumption of commercial whaling

ASAHI (Page 5) (Excerpts)
February 6, 2010

Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Hirotaka Akamatsu has decided to present in the annual general meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in Morocco in June Japan's new proposal to review its research whaling program in the Southern Ocean in exchange for the resumption of a commercial catch of minke whales off Japan. Revealing this plan in a press conference

yesterday, he said that the ministry is pushing ahead with coordination with the U.S., which is opposed to whaling; Norway, which has carried out commercial whaling; and other countries.

Japan has maintained that research whaling in the Southern Ocean is a legitimate act under the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling. It has also called on the IWC to allow its resumption of a commercial catch of minke whales off Japan. The

envisioned proposal would mark a major switch in the nation's whaling policy as it would represent an abandonment of the heretofore assertion of the goals of conducting both research whaling and commercial whaling.

Details such as the size of the whale catch have yet to be revealed. But Akamatsu seems to have no intention of immediately ceasing research whaling, as he told his Australian counterpart in an unofficial ministerial conference in late January under the World Trade Organization (WTO): "Japan will also consider the possibility of reducing (the number of whales to be hunted in its research whaling program)."

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